



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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TO: All Massachusetts Licensed Ambulance Services
FROM: Louise Goyette, Director
RE: Immediate Dispatch, and Confirmation of EMS Response
DATE: January 21, 2004

The Department has received numerous inquiries from ambulance services relating to the new “immediate dispatch” requirement of 105 CMR 170.355, *Responsibility to Dispatch, Treat and Transport*. In particular, the inquiries center around how that requirement relates to the requirement to call backup resources. While the regulations define immediate dispatch, they are silent with respect to the point in time when an ambulance service would have the duty to contact backup.

In order for a dispatcher to determine whether to contact backup, he or she needs to know if ambulance resources are available and responding. A dispatcher can immediately dispatch a call, but without a confirmation that an ambulance response is in progress, the dispatcher does not know at what point backup should be called. The regulations do not state a time limit by which a crew has to inform the dispatcher that it is responding to the scene. The Department anticipates that a time standard for confirmation of response is set locally now, and will ultimately be made part of the service zone plan. Such a time standard must be as short as practicable, but in no case shall the time limit for confirming an ambulance response is in progress be longer than five minutes.

The process by which a community develops a dispatch confirmation system is going to be tailored to suit each individual ambulance service’s needs and available resources. For example, some providers may be able to dedicate two-way radio communication devices to crews that are on duty. Other services may choose to utilize pagers, and yet others may choose to utilize telephone (land-line or cellular) to confirm that a response is in effect. The standards may differ based on available resources or based on whether the provider service operates with on-call or on-duty personnel.

If you have any questions, please call Abdullah Rehayem, Ambulance Regulatory Program manager, at (617) 753-7321.